

## Democracy in crisis: Rukh's debates its purpose

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"The threat of split-up and capture of a part of the organization by those who do not care about the party's future, the result of the presidential election and the future of Ukraine is pending over the Ukrainian People's Rukh," said Vyacheslav Chornovil commenting on the disputes within Ukraine's most prominent democratic political party. Less than a month after the split-up was institutionalized by the formation of two parliamentary factions, the icon of Ukraine's struggle for independence Vyacheslav Chornovil died in a car crash.

Contrary to expectations, calls for unification "in the memory of Chornovil" did not put an end to the confrontation between the two parts of what once had been a powerful party whose leader got 25 percent of the vote at the December 1991 presidential election. Instead, the rivalry escalated, not only due to personal ambitions of leaders of the two wings, but rather due to deeper political considerations connected to the forthcoming presidential election.

The largest association of national and democratic forces, the Ukrainian People's Movement Rukh has always faced a break-up trend. In 1989 the Rukh's political core consisted of three groups of leaders: writers who represented the legitimate, so-called "mild" opposition to the Communist regime; former dissidents with the experience of the Brezhnev and Andropov GULAG; and the scientific intelligentsia. Before 1991, those people were united by their common strife for Ukraine's independence. After 1991, their political preferences differed in accordance with their own political experience, perspectives and political ambitions. The differentiation led to secessions and split-ups.

The Ukrainian People's Movement Rukh showed utmost unity of democrats at its foundation congress in 1989, led by a number of prominent personalities like Ivan Drach, Mykhailo Horyn, Volodymyr Yavorivsky, Volodymyr Chernyak, Larysa Skoryk, Serhiy Holovaty, Vitaly Donchyk, Mykola Porovsky.

The first split-up followed shortly after the party was founded: the Ukrainian Republican Party refused to be an associate member of the Rukh. Subsequently, in March 1990, Ivan Drach and Dmytro Pavlychko announced their intention to form the Democratic Party of Ukraine, and some time later the Democratic party was actually established by Volodymyr Yavorivsky, Vitaly Donchyk and Yuri Badzio.

In March 1992, the Rukh, led by Ivan Drach, Mykhailo Horyn, Vyacheslav Chornovil, Oleksandr Lavrynovych, Mykhailo Boichyshyn and Victor Burlakov, gathered for its third congress, and in May 1992 suffered a new split-up: the congress of the Ukrainian Republican Party elected Mykhailo Horyn as the party chairman, and a month after he resigned from his position of co-chairman of the Rukh. Several months later another co-chairman, Ivan Drach, also resigned, followed by the chairman of the Kyiv regional council of the Rukh Serhiy Holovaty. Thus, by the end of 1992 Vyacheslav Chornovil found himself to be the single leader of the party.

In August 1993, Larysa Skoryk and Mykola Porovsky created an alternative All-Ukrainian People's Movement Rukh. Dmytro Pavlychko became the leader of the new formation, the Democratic Association "Ukraine". Victor Burlakov, deputy chairman of the Rukh in 1992, former chairman of the Truskavets city council, was appointed to the position of chairman of the anti-terrorism department of the Security Service of Ukraine.

The party's 4th congress in December 1995 re-elected Vyacheslav Chornovil as the party chairman, and Bohdan Boiko, Olena Bondarenko, Oleksandr Lavrynovych and Volodymyr Chernyak as his vice chairmen. However, eighteen months later Oleksandr Lavrynovych was dismissed from his position of the party's coordinator for relations with the authorities "for violation of the party discipline".

A new effort to unite forces was made shortly before the March 1998 parliamentary elections. At the top of the Rukh's election list there were names of Vyacheslav Chornovil, Hennadiy Udovenko, Yuri Kostenko, Lilia Hryhorovych, Dmytro Pavlychko, Vyacheslav Kyrylenko, Vyacheslav Koval, Oleksandr Lavrynovych, Ivan Drach, Mykhailo Kosiv, Yuri Kluichkovsky. The party's failure to perform as well as expected in the elections resulted in renewed tension.

In December 1998 Yuri Kostenko spoke about "multiple attempts of the underground power obkom within the party to cause my collision with the party chairman." On February 19, 1999, the majority of the Rukh's parliamentary faction gave a vote of non-confidence to Vyacheslav Chornovil and authorized Yuri Kostenko to perform the duties of the faction leader. Vyacheslav Chornovil opposed the decision. The new leader was followed by Dmytro Pavlychko, Vitaly Shevchenko, Ivan Drach,

Vyacheslav Kyrylenko, Ivan Zayets, Oleksandr Lavrynovych. Vyacheslav Chornovil remained with Hennadiy Udovenko, Lilia Hryhorovych, Mykhailo Kosiv, Vyacheslav Koval, Les Taniuk. The rivalry between former partners in fighting for Ukraine's democratic statehood for the right to keep the party's "brand-name" deteriorated into overt confrontation after the tragic death of Vyacheslav Chornovil. While making the record of events that accompanied the collapse of the Rukh is not the purpose of this piece, it may be useful to evaluate the resulting re-arrangement of political forces and the impact of its outcome on democracy development in Ukraine.

When prominent leaders held two almost simultaneous congresses of what they claimed to represent the Ukrainian People's Movement Rukh, many of 2,494,381 ordinary voters who supported Rukh in the March 1998 parliamentary elections and who voted for 14 members of Rukh - winners of seats in majoritarian consistencies felt confused, disillusioned and betrayed. The party split-up made them face the choice of "the proper Rukh". The Ministry of Justice of Ukraine seemed to have resolved the dispute by issuing a verdict that legitimized the "Chornovil's" wing of the Rukh. The unprecedented promptness of the judgment surprised many but not the official political "heirs" to Vyacheslav Chornovil, led by former Foreign Minister Hennadiy Udovenko whose nomination as the party's candidate to run for presidency in the October 1999 election had cost the Rukh a number of potential voters, upset with nomination of the obviously unelectable politician and suspecting the party of intention to "save the face" by means of demonstrating political activism and then "surrender" the votes to a certain more successful candidate. Since it was clear that "the other Rukh" led by former Minister of the Environment Yuri Kostenko and his reformist backers would most probably refuse to "surrender" its votes in favor of the incumbent President, but was likely to share other right-wingers' preferences for his competitor Yevhen Marchuk, the judgment of the Constitutional Court appeared to be predetermined.

The major damage done by the inter-party rivalry within the only relatively influential democratic political force may be measured in the number of voters who turned away from both of the Rukh's "splinters" and the negative implications for Ukraine's democratic movement in general. First, the 46-strong parliamentary faction of the Rukh divided in two parts, with 29 Rukh MPs joining Yuri Kostenko and 15 staying with Hennadiy Udovenko. Second, the loss of some number of voters will have an impact not only on the two "Rukhs", but on the democratic forces in general, as upset voters, although still highly unlikely to support the left, may not wish to come to the polling station at all, thus, denying support to non-left candidates. In general, the conflict signified that the end of the "constructive opposition" might be near.

However, the recent judgment of the Kyiv regional court created a situation that made unification of the two parts of the Rukh possible. Following the protest of Yuri Kostenko's Rukh, the court overran the decision of the Ministry of Justice to register the Rukh charter amended by the party's congress led by Hennadiy Udovenko and giving priority to his wing.

The decision of the Kyiv regional court - criticized by one of Mr. Udovenko's backers Les Taniuk as a "political action" - to suspend the Ministry's resolution means that the court will review the case.

Meanwhile, both parts of the former Rukh repeatedly stated they sought ways to unification. According to Yuri Kostenko, the decision of the Ministry of Justice was the only circumstance that prevented the two parts' movement towards each other.

#### Postscript

Commenting on the circumstances of gradual decrease of influence of the Ukrainian People's Movement Rukh, its leader Vyacheslav Chornovil once said:

"I confess. In 1994 we were caught by surprise by the breakthrough of the "new left" to the Ukrainian parliament, as we underestimated the weight of social demagoguery. Then, we argued that our main opponents were not the left, but the "party of power", the nomenklatura, which, after the declaration of independence, had compromised all our sacred mottos. However, we engaged in sophisticated debates about opposition, while failing to focus on a specific living person, which, suppressed by our immortal bureaucracy, was left alone to face unemployment, wage arrears, the cold and undernourishment.

I am very worried about the general exhaustion of our people. Therefore, I am painfully thinking about the way to overcome the existing curtain, to retrieve forces to make the quality breakthrough. Hence, my wish for myself and for the Rukh members, and for the whole Ukrainian people is to wake up our will for action." This is the least Ukrainian democrats can do to halt the left-wing relapse.